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ABSTRACT

An overview of the final five monthly programs in the American Issues Radio Forum series broadcast by the member stations of the National Public Radio System is presented. These broadcasts started in September 1975 and continued to May 1976. They formed a "live" rational dialogue, focusing upon issues which have confronted America. Each program was divided into three parts, one hour each, and incorporated both studio guest experts and listeners' call-in comments into the discussion. The guide includes questions for thought, background material, and discussion for each of the following five programs: (1) Working in America; (2) The Business of America; (3) America in the World; (4) Growing up in America; and (5) Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. A bibliography of suggested readings for each program is included. (Author/DE)

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# American Issues Radio Forum Programs 5-9 Book 2

**The American Issues Radio Forum Listeners' Guide is published by National Public Radio and made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.**

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**To begin with...**

Book II of this listeners' guide is an overview of the final five of nine monthly programs in the American Issues Radio Forum series broadcast by the member stations of the National Public Radio system. These broadcasts premiered on September 6, 1975, and will continue through May 1, 1976. They form a "live" national dialogue focusing upon issues which have confronted America from its beginnings and which will be of continuing concern in future centuries.

The *American Issues Radio Forum* is an important media project in the "American Issues Forum," a national bicentennial program created by the National Endowment for the Humanities in cooperation with the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration.

Each of the nine radio programs in the *American Issues Radio Forum* series seeks to involve you and your neighbors in a national discussion about the nature, the development, and the future of our country. Each program is divided into three parts, one hour each in time, and incorporates both studio guest experts and call-in comments from listeners into the discussion. Robert Cromie, popular host of public television's "Book Beat," serves as moderator-host. During the first part of each hour a documentary featuring commentary, readings, music, and discussion by the studio guests is presented. Then members of the radio audience are invited to use a toll free number to telephone their comments and questions. The *American Issues Radio Forum* can succeed in its aim to provide a truly national dialogue only if you, the listener, *participate*.

Widespread discussion about our country, the questions and lessons of its past and the answers and goals of its future, seems an especially appropriate way to commemorate the founding of our nation. The United States of America was brought forth by the passion of debate as truly as by the sacrifice of war. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States were the products of months of discussion by citizens of the new land. As citizens now of the oldest democracy on earth, we have a right and a responsibility to speak out as individuals, secure in the knowledge that our voices will be heard.

NPR hopes that this guide will provide questions for you to think about, back-

ground material for you to use, and ideas to serve as a stimulus for your decision to listen, telephone, and speak.

The topics for the final five programs and their air dates are: "Working in America" (January 10, 1976); "The Business of America" (February 7, 1976); "America in the World" (March 6, 1976); "Growing Up in America" (April 3, 1976); and "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" (May 1, 1976).

Book I of the guide is still available upon request. It contains essays and questions for further discussion on the topics of the first four broadcasts: "A Nation of Nations," "The Land of Plenty," "Certain Unalienable Rights," and "A More Perfect Union."

A complete bibliography for the entire series is to be found in the back of this book.

## Working In America

January 10, 1976

In many ways, the United States was an improbable nation. During the American Revolution, the fiercely individualistic colonists were sometimes hard put to decide whether they disliked one another or the Mother Country more intensely—and Americans have been a contentious people ever since. The first four programs in the *American Issues Radio Forum* series discussed issues that have long sparked controversy: Ethnic and Regional Diversity, the Relation of Man to Nature, the Balance between Individual Freedom and the Social Order, and the Role of Government in Society. Americans have always debated these matters. But as products of shared experience in the New World, Americans also have had much in common. Facing the ongoing challenges of developing the country's resources, Americans subordinated their differences and went about their daily lives—earning their livings, rearing their families, pursuing enterprises great and small to every corner of the globe.

**How has the labor force been organized?**

*The Changing World of Work*

To make America work, Americans worked. To conquer a continent and become a people of plenty required that everybody do their parts from the beginning—in 1607, Captain John Smith warned the young men of Jamestown that if they persisted in

looking for gold instead of helping with the planting, they would not be fed. But while work has been a constant activity in American life, it has changed significantly, especially in the last 100 years. After the Civil War, Americans moved from the farm to the factory. Since World War II, many sociologists record that we have entered into a post-industrial age. Work is increasingly concerned with "human services" such as education and social welfare,—and with professional or technical activities like research or data processing. The 1970 census was the first to find more Americans employed in business and the professions than in manufacturing; there are now more white collar than blue collar workers.

As the nature of work has changed, so has the American's way of looking at his/her job. The ideal of entrepreneurship has long exerted a powerful influence in our culture. Even early labor unions like the Knights of Labor were not immune from that influence. "The aim of the Knights of Labor," said its president, Terence V. Powderly, "is to make each man his own employer." The Knights hoped to help a broad range of workers—they excluded from membership only liquor dealers, professional gamblers, lawyers, bankers, and stockbrokers.

But, its individualistic goals and its diverse membership—not to mention the frequently violent opposition of employers—brought the Knights to near extinction by the end of the nineteenth century. As the new century opened, the leading working people's organization was the American Federation of Labor, a more pragmatic group which accepted employee status for its members and sought ways to get the most out of the emerging industrial system. Organizing skilled craftsmen, the AFL obtained shorter work days and work weeks, higher wages, and better working conditions for its members. When radicals charged that AFL leader Samuel Gompers had no grand strategy, Gompers replied that he did indeed have a program for his workers, a program that could be expressed in a single word: "More!"

Unskilled workers wanted "More" too, but because they were so easily replaced they were more difficult to organize. The AFL supported legislation to keep unskilled workers out of the country and refused to

accept them into its unions. Hence in the 1930s, coal miners, steel workers, and other industrial laborers united in the Congress of Industrial Organizations organizing entire industries without regard to skill. Complicated by many factors, especially racial and ethnic hostilities and inter-union rivalries, the task of organizing the unskilled is still incomplete. A current example is the three-corner struggle among California grape-growers, United Farm Workers and the Teamsters Union to organize farm labor. Unionization is also moving to embrace teachers, municipal employees, professional football players, and other specialized groups previously opposed to organization.

Will all working Americans eventually be categorized and organized? If so, will this development be beneficial? Are union victories necessarily victories for the worker, or for society? Should unions demand more fulfilling jobs or jobs that are merely less time-consuming? Adapting Freud's argument, Harvard sociologist Daniel Bell contends that work is "the chief means of binding an individual to reality" and concludes that "the most nagging of all questions, in a world where religious beliefs are foundering, is what would happen if man lost his sense of a relationship to work." Is this happening now?

**Who works and who doesn't?**

*Economic Policy: Whose Responsibility?* In an age of economic interdependence, when one industry's sneeze can make the entire economy catch cold, questions of economic responsibility also loom large. Have unions fought inflation or fueled it? When dock workers refuse to load grain scheduled for sale to the Soviet Union, are they overstepping the boundaries of a labor union's legitimate concerns? Or is their action justified on behalf of the American consumer? In New York City, a series of interlocking contracts among municipal unions set up a chain reaction, making a never-ending series of wage increases inevitable once one union received a single wage hike. How much responsibility do unions bear for cost-push inflation? And if unions keep wages at artificially high levels, are they also partly responsible for high unemployment and slower recovery from recession?

Because of the changes brought about by New Deal, Fair Deal, New Frontier, and

Great Society programs, many Americans now look to government to answer such questions. Before the Depression, government was either indifferent or hostile to organized labor. President Grover Cleveland sent troops to crush the Pullman Strike, while the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional many laws regulating wages, hours, and working conditions. But with the Wagner National Labor Relations Act of 1935, the federal government for the first time upheld the rights of employees to organize and bargain collectively.

Since World War II, government has been both a mediator between labor and management and an active, working partner in the economy. While employers were discouraged from returning to primitive strike-breaking tactics, unions were restricted by measures such as the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, empowering the government to impose a 60-day "cooling off" period on unions seeking to strike. Government also became a constant presence in the economy: by 1970, nearly 20 percent of all nonagricultural workers found themselves in industries directly dependent on government contracts.

How should government help society move into the post-industrial era? In the 1930s it provided jobs through the WPA, CCC, PWA, and other alphabet agencies. In the 1960s the Job Corps provided job training but not actual employment. Should future government policy be restricted to unemployment relief or should it assume a major role in reshaping the job market? Can it best help victims of "technological unemployment" by assuring them a minimum income, or should it try to preserve part of the "work ethic" by setting up a negative income tax.

**Is the place of work in America changing?**

*"Making Zenith Hum": A Different Tune?* America has traditionally been dedicated to "making Zenith hum," in Sinclair Lewis's phrase, to realizing the possibilities of the "work ethic." But what is ethical about work? Today Americans are told as much about their duty to consume as about their responsibility to produce. If non-workers do their duty as consumers, have they done enough? Does productivity merely bring the country closer to an inevitable bankruptcy of resources? And if assembly lines are tedious and hostile to the human spirit—a point often made

from Charlie Chaplin's "Modern Times" to the recent unrest at General Motor's Lordstown plant—should people be required to work on them? What should the role of public education be in the future? Should it turn away from job-oriented training and devote itself instead to teaching all people ways to enjoy more fully their increased leisure time?

Americans have often objected to arguments against work, seeing in them excuses and face-saving devices for "welfare slackers" and other unproductive members of society. But what kinds of people are on welfare or drawing unemployment benefits? In 1971, according to the Census Bureau, 5.3% of American families received some sort of public assistance, and since then the number has increased substantially. Who are these people? Do they want or accept their status? Do people stay on welfare because the dole saps their initiative? Or do they stay there because, although there is always "room at the top," there is not always room at the bottom of the employment ladder?

Even if one agrees that welfare recipients deserve support, the question remains: who should foot the bill? Today the job-holding American ultimately pays for unemployment insurance as well as aid to dependent children, Social Security and Medicare, and other government benefits. The middle class is already hardest hit by taxation: the poor receive tax-free benefits, the rich find tax shelters, while inflation boosts the typical wage-earner into a higher tax bracket and shrinks his buying power. If government relies on middle-income workers to support the welfare state, does it not drive some of them into poverty, creating more clients for its services and placing even greater burdens on those with their heads still above water? Ronald Reagan has said that "with every ounce of Federal help we get, we surrender an ounce of personal freedom." Does government have any right to tell one American to sacrifice for the sake of another?

Perhaps government could get out of the economy in the post-industrial age if it first redistributed the nation's wealth. Economist Paul Samuelson has observed that "if we made an income pyramid out of a child's blocks, with each layer portray-

ing $1,000 of income, the peak would be higher than the Eiffel Tower, but almost all of us would be within a yard of the ground." In 1968, the richest 10 percent of Americans received more income than the bottom 50 percent of the population. If America becomes a "no-growth" economy, will avenues of upward mobility be closed forever? Should fair shares of America's wealth be allocated by fiat? What constitutes a fair share?

Many Americans are dissatisfied with lives that alternate between the assembly line and the unemployment line. But what outlet this dissatisfaction will take is not yet clear. Will it express itself in noisy or sullen refusal to work well, or refusal to work at all? Will it lead to an entirely new American "work ethic"? Or will post-industrial jobs be more fulfilling than industrial employment? What transformations will the future bring in Americans' historic devotion to toil, and in our relation to the fruits of that toil?

## The Business of America

February 7, 1976

**How has the economy performed?**

Americans had been taking care of business for a long time when Calvin Coolidge uttered his famous affirmation, "The business of America is business." Coolidge only restated the premise upon which his countrymen had always acted. America began as a corporate enterprise: the Virginia Company and the Massachusetts Bay Company both aimed at turning New World endeavors to profit. The nation's founding ideals owed much to John Locke, the seventeenth-century English philosopher who contended that civilization depended upon property rights.

To many Americans, pursuing property and pursuing happiness were the same thing. The method of pursuit might change, but the goals of productivity and profit remained the same. Americans were a commercial people from the beginning, but by the end of the nineteenth century the Yankee trader was overshadowed by the industrial capitalist, the leader of America's industrial revolution. Taking advantage of America's needs and resources, bold and energetic entrepreneurs—including Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Vanderbilt—molded the structure of mod-

ern America. Sometimes praised as "Captains of Industry," sometimes damned as "Robber Barons," they presided over the greatest explosion of material output in history.

In 1869 the average American's yearly work was worth about $940; by 1900 it was valued at $1800. This virtual doubling of productivity took place in an increasingly organized industrial system, in which ever larger factories turned out ever larger quantities of goods. In 1870 not one American factory employed over 1,000 workers; by 1914 several had over 10,000. The United States Steel Corporation, organized in 1901, was the world's first billion-dollar enterprise.

Americans were becoming an incredibly prosperous people. If the typical citizen's standard of living did not approach that of J. P. Morgan, it was much higher than that of the average person in any other country. Life's good things became more accessible: the 1908 Ford cost $850, but by the 1920s the Model T cost less than $300. The automobile put much of the roaring into the twenties – by 1929 more than 26,000,000 cars and trucks traveled America's roads. And presumably anyone could aspire to Henry Ford's eminence had not Ford himself been a poor farm boy? Cornelius Vanderbilt was born in a one-room cabin. Andrew Carnegie started his career as a bobbin boy.

On the other hand, corporatism had costs. Americans grew giddy riding the cycle of boom-and-bust, as periods of prosperity were punctuated by "panics" and depressions in 1819, 1837, 1857, 1873, 1893, 1907, and 1929. Angry and frustrated, the American people looked for villains.

**Who has the power?**

*"The public be damned!" – W. H. Vanderbilt*

Sometimes businessmen invited hostile public reaction. "What do I care about the law?" Cornelius Vanderbilt snorted. "Hain't I got the power?" Richard Whitney of the New York Stock Exchange told government investigators probing the 1929 crash. "You gentlemen are making a great mistake. The Exchange is a perfect institution." Inquiries such as the Pecora Committee's probe of investment banking in 1932 convinced the public that recession and depression were manmade, not natural, disasters. Albert Wiggin, president of the Chase National Bank, was even

revealed to have sold short his own bank's stock, thus profiting from the ruin of the very institution over which he presided. Amidst such disclosures, critics charged that concentrated corporate power threatened America's economic and political health.

Big businessmen responded that bigness was a blessing, not a curse. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., compared the giant corporation to the American Beauty Rose, which could be made to flower only "by sacrificing the early buds which grow around it." The process, Rockefeller said, was "merely the working-out of a law of nature and a law of God." But were oligopoly and monopoly the inevitable results of competition? Or could the competitive economic order described in Adam Smith's 1776 book, *The Wealth of Nations*, be sustained?

It is at least debatable whether Smith's economic world ever existed in the United States. Even in the nineteenth century, supposedly the heyday of untrammeled competition, business often enlisted the support of government. Transcontinental railroad companies received huge federal land grants. Congress raised tariff barriers to protect native industries from foreign competition. The Supreme Court obligingly interpreted the Fourteenth Amendment's "due process" clause, intended to protect Southern freedmen, to shield the corporation.

Even if a system of small competitive firms had once existed, twentieth century Americans have disagreed whether that system could or should be restored. Theodore Roosevelt, for one, said that bigness was inevitable and beneficial. Woodrow Wilson believed otherwise and urged more vigorous enforcement of antitrust laws. New Dealer Rexford Tugwell contended that competition was dangerous and that government should direct a planned, cooperative economy. Another member of the New Deal "Brain Trust," Raymond Moley, agreed that cooperation was desirable but urged that business, not government, should do the planning. But plans are useless without power to carry them out. Where is power located in today's economy? In the big corporations? The labor unions? The government? Does it rest with the consumer? Or is the economy so large and complex that no one can be said to be in control?

**What should the role of government be?**

*"Excellence and bigness are incompatible."*
*—Robert Townsend*

Defenders of big business say that it contributes to America's democracy of consumption by making possible economies of scale, because it is cheaper to buy raw materials and produce finished goods in bulk. Is there a point beyond which this is no longer true? George Stigler, former head of President Nixon's Task Force on Productivity and Competition, insists that "big businesses are generally no more and no less efficient than medium-sized businesses...Why should United States Steel be more efficient than Inland Steel, when United States Steel is simply a dozen or more Inland Steels strewn about the country?"

Businessmen also deny that they exert undue influence on the economy. Even General Motors asserted in 1968 that "competitive rivalry in the industry, far from being replaced by planning and regulation, has intensified." Does this mean that General Motors has no certain power over its marketplace? General Motors' annual revenue is larger than the Gross National Product of Brazil, greater than the annual revenue of any foreign government except Great Britain and the Soviet Union. If such a giant corporation exerts no market control, can any corporation do so?

By 1969 America's 200 largest manufacturers controlled two-thirds of all assets held by companies engaged primarily in manufacturing. And the big are getting bigger: In 1969 alone there were 4,450 mergers, as American companies moved beyond vertical integration (in which one company controls the manufacturing process from raw material to finished product) and horizontal integration (in which a company controls as much of the market for one stage of production as it can) to forming conglomerates, in which great varieties of products are united under a single corporate umbrella. For instance, American Brands (formerly American tobacco) markets not only cigarettes but also liquor, cookies, and staplers. Is this kind of consolidation beneficial to the whole economy? Or does it prevent smaller competitors from taking the field against the giants?

One argument for breaking up giant enterprises holds that they contribute to inflation: instead of charging prices de-

termined by the law of supply and demand, they arbitrarily set prices themselves. In August of 1958 American steel plants operated at 50 percent of capacity. But although demand was weak and European steel manufacturers had lowered their prices to increase sales, American steel companies *raised* their prices $4.50 per ton. Do cases like this show that American business holds buyers captive? Should government become an advocate of competition and the consumer?

*A Military-Industrial Complex?*

Americans have long looked to the federal government to keep order in the economy. For half a century before the New Deal, government made gestures toward regulating big business, sometimes by commission (such as the Interstate Commerce Commission established in 1887, and the Federal Trade Commission set up in 1914) and sometimes by statute (such as the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890). Often, however, commission regulations and antitrust laws were either unenforced or unenforceable.

Today many people contend that government is unable to police corporate behavior because it has become the partner of big business. "In the councils of government," President Eisenhower warned, "we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex." What happens when government makes the economy choose guns instead of butter? Seymour Melman has calculated that the Vietnam War cost approximately 3.5 billion dollars per month—enough to endow four Rockefeller Foundations or train 100,000 scientists or pay all state and local police expenses for a year. In recent years *non*-military research and development in the United States has amounted to only 1.5 percent of the GNP, the same percentage invested by Belgium. How much of America's difficulty competing with foreign producers can be traced to the distorting effects of military spending? Or have defense expenditures in fact underwritten our prosperity in the post-World War II era? What is the best way for America to keep its competitive edge?

In the day of the multinational corporation, it can be asked if business has moved beyond government's control. Is the

multinational corporation a law unto itself? If so, does it frustrate the pursuit of the national interest in foreign policy, or does it serve as a beneficial check on the sometimes selfish aims of individual governments? Does our government act in the American interest, or in the interest of the world, when it intervenes to protect and promote corporation involvement abroad?

These are only some of the questions that Americans are asking about their national preoccupation. Whatever the answers, it seems certain that while business may be at the same old stand in America, there will not, in the future, be business as usual.

## America in the World

March 6, 1976

From its beginnings as a nation, the United States has been involved in world affairs. The Revolution was the country's first problem of foreign policy, and the Continental Congress sent some of its ablest men, including Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay, to Europe to protect and advance American interests. And for as long as it has had a foreign policy, America has been concerned with its image abroad—one reason for issuing the Declaration of Independence was "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind."

**How have others seen us?**

*"America, you have it better than our continent, the old one."—Goethe*

America moved many foreigners to eloquence and action. Many were stirred by the Revolution: the French revolutionary Brissot thought America a "hundred times happy" compared to his homeland. The Polish patriot Thaddeus Kosciusko, after serving in Washington's army, returned home to lead an uprising for Polish independence.

American democracy and prosperity inspired others. In the late 1770s a German university professor wrote that Americans were "the most fortunate people of the whole earth" and expressed surprise that half of Europe had not emigrated there already. "I confess that in America I saw more than America," said the French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville. "I sought the image of democracy itself.... The

question here discussed is interesting not only to the United States but to the whole world; it concerns not a nation, but all mankind." When Woodrow Wilson arrived in Europe in 1919, he was hailed everywhere as the prophet and savior of democracy. "No one has ever had such cheers," a journalist reported from Paris. "I saw Foch pass, Clemenceau pass, Lloyd George, generals, returning troops, banners, but Wilson heard from his carriage something different, inhuman—or superhuman." *L'Europe Nouvelle* marvelled, "Never has a king, never has an emperor received such a welcome."

Foreign response to America was not always so enthusaistic. Before this century, the world obtained most of its information about America and Americans from travellers—and for every Tocqueville speculating on the worldwide implications of America's democratic experiment, there were dozens who, like Charles Dickens, saw the New World as a new curiosity shop, a quaint and sometimes disgusting sideshow of quirks and strange customs. Even as cheering crowds surged around Wilson, French Premier Georges Clemenceau was observing sardonically, "God gave us the Ten Commandments, and we broke them. Wilson gives us the Fourteen Points. We shall see." John Maynard Keynes was more blunt: he thought Wilson "a blind and deaf Don Quixote."

Americans were at least as ambivalent about foreign lands as foreigners were about America. Most agreed with Wilson that America was "the only idealistic nation in the world"—they thought Europe corrupt and dangerous, the Orient mysterious and forbidding. They rejoiced that while the world needed America, America did not need the world. "No country on the globe is so happily situated," Thomas Paine exulted in *Common Sense*. "We need go abroad for nothing." His statement has been repeated and reformulated in isolationist plans and policies such as "Fortress America," "America First," and, most recently, "Project Independence." But today, when technology makes it impossible for America to rest securely behind its oceans and industrialism makes it necessary to range far and wide for raw materials, markets and investment outlets, how feasible is any plan for America to keep to itself?

Is the isolationist impulse the primary source of American foreign policy? Or is


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the diplomatic wellspring found in a sense of Manifest Destiny and divine mission? Has American foreign policy been selfless and idealistic, or has it been the policy typical of any imperialistic industrial power? Has American involvement in the world been prompted primarily by internal drives, or has it been mainly a response to external threats to American security?

**Is there an "American" diplomacy?**

*"We shall be as a City upon a Hill."—John Winthrop, 1630*

From John Winthrop, first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, to Senator William Borah, leader of the "irreconcilable" isolationists of the 1920s, to the so-called "neo-isolationists" of today, many Americans have insisted that our country should be *in* the world but not *of* it. America, they asserted, should be a shining example to open the eyes and touch the hearts of people everywhere. Partly this was expediency: in its early days the nation had little energy to spare for fighting strong foreign powers, though it put considerable energy into fighting weaker ones on its own frontiers. President Washington recognized the limitations that domestic needs placed on foreign policy when he proclaimed America neutral in the war between France and England in 1793, and he warned repeatedly of the dangers in "entangling alliances." Secretary of State John Quincy Adams summarized America's missionary isolationism in 1821: "Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions, and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own."

America also championed and vindicated its own sense of honor. President Jefferson authorized raids on the Barbary pirates, and America went to war with Britain over impressment in 1812. American concern with its prestige and image abroad did not begin with the "Mayaguez" incident, or in the Gulf of Tonkin, or even with the sinking of the "Maine".

A more glorified notion of national prestige was contained in the concept of Manifest Destiny, the idea that God had given America the mission to spread democracy and expand the "area of freedom." Manifest Destiny compelled America to


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wrest Arizona, New Mexico, and California from Mexico and inspired the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* in 1853 to boast that America was bounded on the "East by sunrise, West by sunset, North by the Arctic Expedition, and South as far as we darn please." In 1898 President McKinley claimed that "We need Hawaii just as much and a good deal more than we did California. It is manifest destiny."

In 1898 many Americans regarded insurgent leader Emilio Aguinaldo as the "Washington of the Philippines," just as earlier generations had lauded Simon Bolivar and Jose de San Martin as "Washingtons of South America" and given Hungarian revolutionary Louis Kossuth a tumultuous welcome in 1851. But Aguinaldo was soon to rebel against the American government itself, which considered the Philippines a stepping-stone to the trade of the Orient. Must America always be divided between the ideal of democratic revolution and the pragmatic needs of security and prosperity?

Perhaps America's primary concern all along has been not destiny but dollars. In 1900 Secretary of State John Hay announced that in the Orient the United States would pursue an Open Door Policy, expecting all foreign governments with spheres of influence in China to place American business on the same footing with their own nationals. Where did this leave the Chinese? According to a memorial tribute, Secretary Hay "maintained the Open Door and the Golden Rule." Are the two always compatible? What were the most important motives prompting Senator Kenneth Wherry when he told a cheering crowd in 1940, "With God's help, we will lift Shanghai up and up, ever up, until it is just like Kansas City"?

How important is economic self-interest to America's foreign policy? Are "dollar diplomacy" and "gunboat diplomacy" more representative of American behavior than the Good Neighbor Policy, the Marshall Plan, and the Peace Corps? The Marshall Plan is a controversial case in point: although it was hailed as unadulterated idealism by Americans at the time, revisionist historians have noted that the United States also demanded access to recipients' economic plans and guarantees for American investment. But is a nation not idealistic if it wants to control the way its money is spent?

Or is American diplomacy primarily a matter neither of economics nor of idealism but simply national security? President Truman applied the Monroe Doctrine to the whole world when he announced that "totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States." But others have asked if every nation is a domino. To what extent does American security depend on the form of government adopted in Korea and Vietnam?

**What is America's impact on the world?**

*"Poor Mexico—so far from God and so close to the United States."—Porfirio Diaz*
For a long time, most of the world did not have to worry about American foreign policy. But by the end of the nineteenth century, the United States was the world's leading industrial power, and since then America's image has been imprinted on foreign minds by direct economic, political, and military contact. The United States acquired colonies and protectorates, and its corporations expanded to every point of the compass. With the First and Second World Wars, the United States became the world's dominant power. Foreign observers now experienced the American way to doing things on their own soil.

In recent years, writers such as Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber in his book *The American Challenge* warned Europeans that the United States threatened to dominate the continent economically. Canadian novelist Richard Rohmer, in *Ultimatum* has developed similar themes. For these people, the cheerful Coca Cola lyric—"I'd like to teach the world to sing/ In perfect harmony./I'd like to buy the world a Coke/And keep it company."—had profoundly disquieting implications. Nor were Americans unaware of the problem: Senator J. William Fulbright spoke against "the arrogance of power," while self-conscious tourists tried not to be "ugly Americans."

It might be asked, however, whether developments in the past ten years have not rendered obsolete all talk of an "American Century," all notions of a world dominated by American ideals and interests. Perhaps the price was too high. In 1939 the American army numbered fewer than 200,000 men and had a budget of less than $500 million. The United States


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had no military alliances and no troops stationed on foreign soil. A third of a century later American armed forces included almost three million men and women, the Defense Department's annual budget was pushing $80 billion, America had military alliances with nearly 50 nations and troops stationed in more than 100. In addition, the government had undertaken covert activity to undermine governments in Cuba, Chile, Cambodia, Laos, and elsewhere; even the United States was honeycombed with operatives supposedly protecting the national security. Scholars warned of an "imperial presidency."

Despite all this effort, Asian guerrillas had frustrated the American military machine. Third World oil interests helped fuel American inflation. As the Cold War thawed and "Free World" partnerships cooled, international relationships became more complex, and less manageable. In the face of such conditions, can the United States have a foreign "policy" at all, or are we condemned constantly to adapt to recurrent crises?

## Growing Up in America

April 3, 1976

Family, school, church: three intimate social institutions which create and preserve the most personal feelings of community. As moral, intellectual, and spiritual custodians, these institutions are expected to conserve the best of civilization and pass it on to new generations. In an impersonal age, when Americans often feel unrewarded on the job, ignored in the supermarket, and insignificant at the polls, they still expect to be valued for themselves at home, in the classroom, and in their place of worship.

Today many observers believe these institutions are besieged and disintegrating. Are the family, our educational system, and religion outmoded? When accelerating change makes the individual's head spin with "future shock," can any institution act as shock absorber? When flexibility and adaptability might be the most essential human qualities, should any institution emphasize stability and continuity?

**Is home still where the heart is?**

From the beginning, America challenged the family's traditional educational function: ways handed down for centuries in the Old World did not always work in the New. Young people who believed they knew better than their elders could prove it; abundant free land drew sons and daughters away from the old homestead, leaving older generations behind. Later generations who continued the westward march eventually saw the flow reverse, as their children sought freedom and opportunity in the cities. The "generation gap" has existed both geographically and psychologically for a long time.

As families have lost their cohesiveness over time, so too have they grown smaller. Fifty years ago, half of the American families still included at least one extra adult; today the precentage is less than five percent. Grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins have been replaced by surrogate relatives: baby-sitters, day care centers, psychologists, self-help books, even television. The young, middle-aged, and elderly often live removed from extensive contact with people of different ages, residing in generational ghettos called singles apartments, young-married housing, or retirement villages. Americans born in 1970 can expect to live ten years longer than those born in 1920, but how many of those years will be years of isolation?

Have surrogate relatives been adequate substitutes? Every year over a million children run away from home. Statistics suggest that youthful alcoholism and drug abuse are on the increase. More than ten percent of America's children will appear in juvenile court before reaching age 18. Does the family require more outside support or less outside interference to handle these problems?

How has woman's changing role affected American family life? In colonial times, American women were far outnumbered by men and as a result often obtained better treatment than did their European counterparts. On the frontier, women received many political and social rights previously denied them—Wyoming was the first state to establish woman's suffrage. But the city gave women their greatest opportunities. Employment promised economic independence—the telephone operator and typist spearheaded women's entry into all fields.

Technology supplied other freedoms, too. More sophisticated and widespread birth control methods helped reduce family size—in 1972 America reached the zero population growth rate. Sex became a means of recreation, not just procreation. Half a century ago, H. L. Mencken observed that "The veriest schoolgirl of today knows as much as the midwife of 1895." F. Scott Fitzgerald was sure that "None of the Victorian mothers had any idea how casually their daughters were accustomed to be kissed." Today, sidewalk sales of nudespapers and proliferating pornographic movie houses testify to the booming business in erotic entertainment.

Parents who themselves are likely to be making the "Singles Scene" can hardly object to the "new permissiveness." In 1890 one marriage in 17 ended in divorce; in 1920, one in seven; today, almost one in two. One child in six is now being reared by a single parent. And even when parents stay together, most families do not live as they did 50 years ago. Today more than half of American mothers with school-age children work outside the home; the children are left to peers, teachers, and television. Most of these women work because their families need the money. Must American parents choose between a low standard of living and a low standard of upbringing for their children?

Some families have tried to re-create the "extended" family by forming neighborhood block associations and "child-watch" programs, by joining Foster Grandparents organizations, and even by participating in communal living experiments. Other couples, noting the chaos around them, decide to have no children. Is either course satisfactory? Alarmed parents, teachers and clergymen call for restoration of the American family. But the family has always been a dynamic institution. Can it be restored to some traditional norm?

**What do the schools do?**

*"Be true to your school."—The Beach Boys*

Until recently, Americans were certain that the road to the good life was paved with learning. To make sure that road was taken, in 1647 the Puritans passed a law requiring all towns of 50 families to provide teachers of reading and writing, primarily so that every Puritan could read the Bible.

The ideas of the American Revolution made remarkable headway partly because so many people could read and debate them. By the nineteenth century, education was considered not only a moral and practical necessity but a democratic birthright. Educator Horace Mann thought public schools, which proliferated across the nineteenth-century landscape, "the greatest discovery ever made by man." The Morrill Act of 1862 provided for public "land grant" colleges and made higher education available to the masses. And still the public demanded more: they flocked to Chautauqua lectures, lyceums, extension programs, vocational schools, and correspondence courses.

In 1850, 28 percent of Americans over ten years old were illiterate; by 1900 the figure was below 11 percent; by 1950, below four percent. Not only were more people educated, but people got more education. In 1900 only four percent of eligible people graduated from high school; by the late 1950s more than 60 percent did so. Higher education also boomed: by 1960 almost 40 percent of eligible high school graduates enrolled in colleges, compared with only 15 percent in 1940. Millions of veterans have attended college since World War II thanks to the G.I. Bill.

Education seemed the perfect way to build a democracy based on merit. Early in the twentieth century, "progressive" theorists argued that education was critical to every phase of life. "The aim of education," said John Dewey, "should be to teach the child to think, not what to think." Generations of novice teachers were told to "teach the child, not the subject." Does this mean that all subjects are created equal—and that all students can be made equal?

During the mid-fifties a technological advance called television produced the greatest effect on education since the invention of the printing press. Television has been both praised and damned. It has been called a destroyer of minds, a reason why Johnny can't read, a thought-dulling opiate. It has also been called a miracle of modern education, a positive influence for stimulating creativity and an open sesame to the exploration of people of other lands and life-styles, animals and plants, space and sports. Public television's award-winning programs "Sesame Street" and the "Electric Company" have

modified and challenged school curriculums. Has television deserved either the praise or the blame? Does the use of television in the classroom add a third dimension to the teaching experience or does it merely provide another technological barrier between the student and the teacher?

Scholastic Aptitude Test scores, measuring students' readiness for college, have declined every year since 1963. Has this happened because teachers are geared to teach the great American average, to the detriment of bright students? Have the "3 Rs" been neglected in favor of entertaining irrelevance? "When I think back on all the crap I learned in high school," songwriter Paul Simon writes, "it's a wonder I can think at all." What should children learn in school? Is it more important to teach them to read, write, and count, or to give them prescribed social attitudes?

John Dewey argued that conditions in a country like the United States, "composed of a combination of different groups with different traditional customs," necessitated "an educational institution which shall provide something like a homogenous and balanced environment for the young." The schools, in other words, would be the guarantors of equality in an otherwise dangerously diverse society. But do our schools in fact perform that function? Recently, Christopher Jencks of Harvard has branded as a myth the notion that education ensures equality and upward mobility. Students arrive at the classroom door stamped with the distinctive marks of their various class, racial, ethnic, and family backgrounds. Teachers and courses of study cannot – perhaps they should not – remove those marks entirely. Diplomas, it seems, do not necessarily democratize.

The question of what goes on in the classroom cannot be separated from the question of who controls the schools: Parents? Teachers? The Congress? To prevent coercion, should education be run by the voucher system, in which parents enroll children in schools of their own choosing and thus assign their taxes to support that school? Has public education come to the end of the road? Is there no "one best system"?

**Religion: Does it divide or unite us?**

*"It is better to trust in the Rock of Ages than to know the age of rocks."—William Jennings Bryan*

Americans have long realized there could be no "one best system" in religion. America was settled partly because it offered refuge from religious persecution—Puritans in New England, Quakers in Pennsylvania, and Catholics in Maryland were only among the first to seek sanctuary in the New World. The memory of persecution and the realization that no denomination could ever dominate led to religious toleration and insistence on separating church from state.

Despite this declared separateness, religion has been intertwined with American politics and society from the beginning. Reverend John Peter Muhlenberg doffed his clerical robe during a Revolutionary War sermon to reveal his Continental Army officer's uniform and enlisted volunteers after the service. The Civil War split between North and South was presaged by parallel splits in major Protestant denominations over the slavery issue. Many Protestant bodies promoted Prohibition legislation, and the Catholic clergy strenuously opposed the birth control movement. Religious leaders have often considered themselves keepers of America's conscience—ministers such as Theodore Parker were prominent in the abolitionist cause. A. J. Muste was only one of many to protest government policy in World War I. More recently Martin Luther King, Jr. rallied the Civil Rights movement, while William Sloane Coffin and Daniel and Philip Berrigan spoke against the Vietnam War. Does the presence of religious leaders at the cutting edge of so many conflicts mean that American religion has been a divisive, rather than a reconciling, force? Should religion have an explicitly social dimension?

Social concern has not always created conflict. The Catholic Church often acted as a social service agency, helping recent immigrants get started in America. Protestants in the late nineteenth century preached the "Social Gospel" and tried to help clean up the slums. Sometimes the "Social Gospel" became the gospel of good fellowship: in the 1920s ministers trimmed their sails to business breezes, preached pep talks disguised as sermons about Jesus-as-go-getter, and gave their churches over to bazaars and shuffleboard. Is religion

always a tail on society's kite?

If religion is influenced at all by society, what do churches native to America—such as the Mormons, A.M.E. Zionists, and Christian Scientists—reveal about the American character? And what does it mean that Catholics and Jews have recently become more prominent in American politics? Is the election of John Kennedy or Jacob Javits a welcome sign of toleration or a warning that America's spiritual life no longer has any relevance to everyday affairs?

Americans have looked to the church, as they have looked to the family and the school, for peace, inspiration, and social unity. Have these institutions fostered cohesion or discord? Do they mirror society, or can they be mobilized to move it? Can they bring us together? Or are Americans already cut loose from them, destined to wander in a never-ending "pursuit of loneliness"?

## Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness

May 1, 1976

The vast richness of the American continent inspired Americans to believe that every citizens could realize the "American dream" by exercising the rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Openness and abundance promoted optimism and individualism, which in turn sparked achievement. "Can do" was an unofficial national motto—Americans were sure that they could carve their own niches and shape their own destinies.

Today many people insist that optimism is unrealistic. When the land fills up and resources dwindle, who can look hopefully to the future? When society is dominated by mass production and mass consumption, our very names reduced to checking account numbers and Social Security cards, can any American claim to be self-made and unique? Is individualism today even desirable, or is it a dangerous throwback, an excuse for social irresponsibility? Is America now a closed society, with little room for individual growth and upward mobility? Or are limited horizons born of narrow vision and lost faith?

**Individualism?**

*"Men have become the tools of their tools."*
*—Thoreau*

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, America could afford individualism. The frontier gave elbow-room to many Daniel Boones. The land seemed to promise that there would always be enough for everyone. And America was beyond the reach of its enemies, so the individual was unfettered by government oversight and military discipline. But even in the nineteenth century, Henry David Thoreau observed regretfully that "Wherever a man goes, men will pursue and paw him with their dirty institutions, and, if they can, constrain him to belong to their desperate odd-fellow society." If Thoreau took to Walden Pond today, he would need a building permit for his cabin, barbed wire to protect his bean patch, bottled drinking water, and high tolerance for air polluted by campers and passing traffic. Environmentalists would tell him the air and water were dirty because owners of factories and automobiles put their individual rights ahead of their social responsibilities; they might also criticize his taking a choice

pondside location for himself. Is individualism invariably selfish? Can a nation of 200,000,000 people whose resources are shrinking afford nonconformity?

"Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist," Emerson said, but while Americans have always preached individualism they have also worshipped heroes. And they lavished the most affection not on the eccentric but on people who exemplified and magnified the common man's virtues—the rough-hewn Lincoln, for example, more than the aristocratic Washington. Folk heroes were both down-to-earth and larger-than-life, whether drawn from life, as were Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett, or from literature and legend, as were Natty Bumppo, Paul Bunyan, and Mike Fink. Perhaps the most enduring folk hero has been the man on horseback, the solitary figure who rides into town to impose law and order on social chaos. From Wyatt Earp and "Wild Bill" Hickok to Gary Cooper in "High Noon" and Buford Pusser in "Walking Tall," the lone fighter for social justice has been admired and glorified—even Henry Kissinger admits he often imagines himself in a similar role. What should this folk hero's durability tell Americans about themselves? Once civilization is organized and established, what role can the hero play? Is it possible to ride tall in the saddle in a gray flannel suit? Or in a skirt? Has our culture denied women the chance to be individuals—heroic or otherwise?

Perhaps individualism was never all that it was cracked up to be. In the 1830s Alexis de Tocqueville contended that American democracy unravelled the social fabric: "Not only does democracy make every man forget his ancestors," he said, "but it hides his descendants and separates his contemporaries from him; it throws him back forever upon himself alone and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart." Is loneliness the price of individualism? Or is regard for privacy the only way to ensure a decent, stable society—is it true, as Robert Frost said, that "good fences make good neighbors"?

Tocqueville also observed that while Americans professed individualism, they were often strict conformists. Is the "other-directed" man, always glancing nervously over his shoulder to make sure everyone approves, a recent development,

as sociologist David Riesman believes, or an omnipresent figure in our history? Is conformism the product of an open or a closed society? What social and economic forces produced the "organization man," the "team player" on the Watergate cover-up squad who knew that "to get along you have to go along"? Has the typical American's conscience ever been anything more than, in H. L. Mencken's words, "the inner voice that warns us somebody may be looking"?

We have often been called a "nation of joiners." From the Lions' Club to the Country Club, the Kiwanis to the P.T.A., Americans belong. Is this the way we seek to overcome our individual isolation? Must one identify with a group—the Pepsi Generation, middle America, senior citizens, feminists, Italian-Americans, or whatever—to be a person? Or must one rebel to establish identity? How can the typical American—living in a housing development or apartment complex, working on an assembly line, eating packaged foods, driving a mass-produced car, and using mass media for information and entertainment—express individuality?

**Achievement?**

*"I ain't nothing but a winner."—Paul "Bear" Bryant*

Traditionally the Americans have asserted individuality through achievement. In colonial New England, the "Puritan ethic" stressed achievement through piety, frugality, and industriousness; the Puritans believed that one's "calling" gave one, in historian John Cawelti's words, "respectable competence in this world and eternal salvation in the world to come," even if it did not make one wealthy. But as the continent revealed its richness, Americans scrambled to get ahead of one another—social status came to depend on material wealth, not devotion to calling, and the nineteenth-century achiever emphasized aggressiveness, forcefulness, and competitiveness. Popular nineteenth-century lecturer Russell Conwell, author of *Acres of Diamonds*, made success a religion when he declared that making money was a holy duty: "For a man to say, 'I do not want money,' is to say, 'I do not wish to do any good to my fellowmen,'" Conwell said. More typical was the tough-minded, self-centered comment of Tammany politician George Washington Plunkitt, who asserted bluntly, "I seen my opportunities and I

took 'em." Another observer pointed out that Americans were expected to exploit opportunities: "In America a man is accounted a failure, and certainly ought to be, who has not risen above his father's station in life."

Some Americans berated their countrymen's crass materialism. One expatriate of the 1920s declared that America was "the enemy of the artist, of the man who cannot produce something tangible when the five o'clock whistle blows." Other Americans realized that success was expensive even to those who achieved it. Novelists such as William Dean Howells, John Dos Passos, and Theodore Dreiser wrote of the toll exacted by mobility and single-minded pursuit of accomplishment. But only after prosperity crashed in 1929 did many people ask if go-getting created more problems than it solved. If society was dominated by giant institutions, they said, how could people be blamed for failing or praised for succeeding? Scholarly studies cast doubt on the notion that hard work and talent would inevitably be rewarded. Vietnam War protesters chanted "Work! Study! Get ahead! Kill!" and claimed that "the system" demanded inhumanity to man as the price of success. Confronted by the confession of Jeb Magruder, people wondered if you had to lose your "moral compass" to move up in the world. Does achievement require exploitation of other people? Are we, as a people and as individuals, growing less committed to "can do" than we once were?

Some critics charge that those attacking competition are the spoiled sons and daughters of the upper-middle class who want to deny to others the opportunities their own parents and grandparents had. Is competition the best way to prove one's worth? If so, what is the best way to compete? Americans have traditionally believed that competition builds character and sought a "moral equivalent of war"—one popular substitute has been organized sports. But do sports build character or brutalize it? Leo Durocher said, "Nice guys finish last." Locker-room walls sprout signs saying, "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing" and "Show me a good loser and I'll show you a loser." Even the Saturday afternoon halftime show is often a paramilitary exhibition. Is competition a barbaric throwback? Is it true that "even if you win the rat race, you're still a rat"?

**Optimism?**

*"America is promises."—Archibald MacLeish*

Americans once were sure that they did not strive in vain. But in recent years they have been nagged by doubts. In 1969, President Nixon observed that "We find ourselves rich in goods, but ragged in spirit; reaching with magnificent precision for the moon, but falling into raucous discord on earth." Is optimism unrealistic, or is pessimism premature—is it true, as Franklin Roosevelt said in 1933, that "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself"?

Americans long believed their abilities were God-given and practical—one stanza of the national anthem asserts that "conquer we must, For our cause it is just," while Emerson was certain that "we have no questions to ask which are unanswerable." And Americans seldom were willing to settle for half a loaf: They went to war in 1917, for example, to "make the world safe for democracy" and to "end all wars." But this all-or-nothing mentality was easily upset—a disillusioned generation in the wake of World War I found, in the words of F. Scott Fitzgerald, "all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken." To the absolutist mentality, it was but a step from the world in which everything was possible to the world in which nothing was possible.

Today environmentalists warn us that we may be burning ourselves to death by destroying the ozone layer, crowding ourselves into starvation by overpopulation, bankrupting our natural resources and making the countryside painful to see as well as impossible to use. Don Marquis defined an optimist as "a guy that has never had much experience." Is America only now losing its innocence? Or are today's nay-sayers just as wrong as yesterday's starry-eyed optimists?

Americans have warned of impending doom before—Mark Twain and Henry Adams were only two of the best-known prophets of pessimism. But only recently have pessimists attracted large audiences. Clearly Thomas Jefferson was wrong when he estimated that the United States had enough land and resources to be self-sufficient for a thousand generations. But have reports of the death of the American dream been greatly exaggerated? F. Scott Fitzgerald, the oracle of the disenchanted young in the 1920s, once tried to see

America as the earliest European explorers had seen it: "For a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder." Can Americans ever recapture that spirit? Can they still say, with Thoreau, "Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star"?

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